# Position Statement on Landscape, Land Use and Economy

**September 2020**

Scotland's Landscape Alliance

# About the Scottish Landscape Alliance

The Scottish Landscape Alliance is a grouping of over 65 organisations with a common interest in raising awareness of the importance of Scotland's landscapes to climate resilience and biodiversity, our economic performance and public health and wellbeing and, in doing this, gain public and political support for the better care of Scotland's landscape and places to maximise future benefits.

Our vision is a Scotland where the benefits of landscape are recognised, and where landscape is designed and cared for to strengthen its role in delivering Scotland's national outcomes, the UN Sustainable Development Goals[i] and the principles of the European Landscape Convention[ii].

The purpose of this paper is to describe the issues and make recommendations in respect of making better use of our landscape to realise improvements in health and wellbeing, especially for those experiencing the greatest disadvantage in our society. The paper is informed by the work of the Scottish Landscape Alliance's members, with a focus on land use and the economy.

**Key Messages**

- Greater public debate is needed to improve understanding and widen engagement about Scotland's landscape.
- Landscape has intrinsic value(s) which should be recognised in asset management and evaluated and costed when changes in land use are proposed.
- Areas of highest scenic and landscape quality should be identified and protected through appropriate legislation and stewardship.
- Investing in landscape and landscape-led design solutions will help Scotland meet its ambitious renewable energy and climate targets, whilst maintaining its reputation for quality food and drink and as a visitor destination driven by its landscape.
- Decisions on development, land use or land management should not result in net loss of landscape quality or biodiversity. In fact, change can be used to enhance landscape quality, offset adverse impacts and deliver biodiversity net gain.
- Communities of interest and of place have a right of access to landscape and should have the support and means to influence and determine change in local landscapes.
- Landscape rights and the understanding of benefits of landscape should be part of school and relevant higher education curricula.

# Understanding the issue

## What do we mean by landscape?

***Landscape is about the relationship between people and place. It provides the setting for our day-to-day lives and is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere****: our urban areas, countryside, coasts and waterways, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty, as well as everyday spaces. Landscapes are an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of diversity of our shared cultural and natural heritage and a foundation for identity, now and in the future*

## Summary statement

Scotland's landscapes have long been recognised as a key economic asset, particularly for its crucial food and drink and tourism industries. To retain this value they require care in their treatment and investment in their upkeep. These diverse landscapes change constantly but their economic and their intrinsic value means that the nature and extent of that change should always be taken into account in decisions about land use. Their continuing evolution should be guided by informed public debate about options and objectives.

Communities of place and of interest should have an opportunity to influence changes in landscapes of importance to them, and be helped to do so. Those areas of highest scenic and landscape quality should be identified and protected through appropriate legislation and stewardship.

Across Scotland, decisions on development, land use and land management should aim to maintain, and where possible enhance landscape quality. High quality landscape design has a key role to play in achieving this objective.

Educational curricula should ensure that Scotland's young people understand and appreciate their country's wealth of fine landscapes. Over the long term, high quality surroundings should be a right of everyone.

## Landscape capacity for change

The European Landscape Convention recognises that changes in the world economy are in many cases accelerating the transformation of landscapes. Forces for change are leading to competition for land[iii] (Smith *et al.*, 2010), intensification of land use for agriculture[iv], housing, commerce, woodlands, renewable energy[v] and coastal areas for aquaculture, transport infrastructure, and creating impacts on cultural landscapes[vi].

The United Kingdom National Ecosystem Assessment[vii] concluded that the "landscape of the UK has changed markedly during the last 60 years with the expansion of enclosed farmlands, woodlands and urban areas." In Scotland, examples of significant changes in extent or types of land use are: i) an increase in the area of impermeable surfaces (e.g. due to housing, commercial property, transport developments), were estimated to be increasing at a rate of 14.5 $km^2$ per annum (2008 to 2014); Centre of Expertise on Climate Change, 2018); ii) woodlands and forestry, increasing from 7% in 1950[viii], to 18.5% in 2019; iii) renewable energy for electricity, with installed capacity increasing from 4,369 MW in Quarter 4 2008 to 11,891 MW in Quarter 1 of 2020, of which sources from onshore wind increased from 2,486 MW in 2010 to 8,357 MW in 2020[ix,x].

The Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (*Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland* [xi] reiterates support for place-based initiatives for strengthening social capital, and that Scotland's 'outstanding natural assets' provides it with 'significant comparative advantage'. Scotland's landscapes are amongst its most important assets and will have a key role in approaches to tackling global challenges such as a green recovery to COVID-19, enhancing biodiversity (as emphasised in the 'Edinburgh Declaration'[xii] on a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, August 2020'), and the ambitious target of Scottish Government of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045[xiii]. For example an aim of the Scottish Government's Forestry Strategy is to increase woodland cover to 21% by 2032[xiv]; and the Scottish Government Climate Change Plan[xv] has a target of restoring 250,000 hectares of degraded peatland by 2030. Such investment provides an opportunity to enhance those landscapes and features that contribute to 'the cultural heritage of places' of Scotland, as described in Our Place in Time[xvi].

Scotland's landscapes and seascapes have a close relationship with key areas of its economy. Of £14.9 billion exports from Scotland in 2017, Food and Drink was worth £5.9 billion, of which £4.4 billion was from Scotch whisky, £500 million of farmed salmon, and £82 million from beef and lamb[xvii]. These three example products have raw materials and value chains which are primarily concentrated in rural Scotland, drawing on many of its characteristics such as natural resources for production (e.g. soils, water, biodiversity), and aesthetics and imagery for marketing, and contribute significantly to the history and cultural features important for tourism, recreation and creative industries.

Fifty percent of visitors to Scotland report scenery and landscape as a key motivation for visiting Scotland for holidays or short breaks. Associated characteristics of history and culture, and 'to get away from it all" are also cited as motivations to visit by 33% and 23% respectively[xliii]. In its assessment of Scotland's ecosystem service accounts the Office of National Statistics (2019)[xviii] reports an increase of 94% of the time people spent on outdoor recreation in Scotland (between 2004 and 2017), with 798 million hours spent on outdoor recreation (up from 400 million in 2004), and over 550 million visits by 2017, compared to 300 million visits in 2004. Such visits are a very significant contribution to the Scottish economy, with approximately 15 million visitors to Scotland in 2015, the expenditure by whom was estimated at £4.7 billion.

However, maintaining the quality of Scotland's landscapes cannot be taken for granted. For example, the Scottish Natural Heritage Indicator of Visual influence of built development[xix] shows increasing pressures on landscapes, with one or more types of built development seen from 73% of Scotland's land area by 2013, up from 71.4% in 2012, and 65.4% in 2008. It reported the largest change was due to wind turbines, increasing from 19.9% in 2008 to 45.9% in 2013. Such development has had implications for the character of landscapes[xx] as well as for the seascapes of Scotland and its islands. Some areas of Scotland which have experienced some of those pressures are reported as having no remaining landscape capacity for wind turbines, such as large parts of Aberdeenshire (Strategic Landscape Capacity Assessment for Wind Energy in Aberdeenshire[xxi]).

Matthews and Selman (2006)[xxii] explain the dilemma of practices that produced our landscapes being overtaken by social and economic forces that reflect new priorities, such as addressing the current climate and biodiversity emergencies. Tackling those emergencies has led to changes in land management or landscape features (e.g. renewable energy, woodlands, agricultural practices, aquaculture). Such changes may be incompatible with the properties with which landscapes were associated, or valued. However, there is a need for difficult but educated decisions to be made about changes in the landscape. As Matthews and Selman (2006) argue, there is a need to link society and the economy with environmental services, functions, and land uses, with an aim of generating mutually reinforcing feedback loops that lead to socially preferred outcomes.

As Scotland responds to, or leads, such social and economic changes, opportunities should be taken of building landscapes into solutions that tackle social challenges. Such an opportunity is to design and implement nature-based solutions using a collaborative, place-based approach, high quality design which respects the natural and cultural environment and heritage, in line with the commitment of Scottish Government to the Place Principle. These solutions should reflect the concepts of adaptive capacity, in which landscape and land use can be re-configured 'without significant changes in crucial functions or declines in ecosystem services' (Resilience Alliance[xxiii]).

Landscape is free at the point of appreciation and use but requires investment to maintain the economic, social and cultural benefits it provides. A landscape-related agenda should be designed to promote changes in thinking and attitudes towards land and investment. Expectations of objectives of investment should reflect longer timescales, aiming to reduce consequences of short-term objectives for planning and returns.

Payment for landscape as a public good could be linked to the intensity or types of use with impacts (e.g. mass consumption of the landscape and consequences on experiences). The Scottish Rural Development Programme 2014 to 2020 was allocated 1.46 billion Euros (including national co-funding) for 'enhancing the rural economy, supporting agricultural and forestry businesses, protecting and improving the natural environment, addressing the impact of climate change and supporting rural communities'. Designing a successor to the current Scottish Rural Development Programme (2014-2020) provides an opportunity to strengthen the current commitment to 'preserve the historic environment' to one of its active management, and incorporating landscape outcomes as requirements of new agriculture and rural development support mechanisms.

Other new approaches for funding the maintenance and enhancement of landscapes should be considered that reflect the values associated with landscapes, not all of which can be monetised. Such approaches should recognise the successes and challenges created by "hyper-activity" of visitor interest, and the consequences of contributions made to achieving public policies. These approaches should: i) build on the experimental natural accounts[xviii] to guide investment that delivers multiple benefits (e.g. enhance biodiversity, reduce net greenhouse gas emissions, care for the historic environment), in line with the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery[xi], and the Scottish Government Economic Strategy; ii) disincentivise certain behaviours through targeted levies such as differential charging for vehicles or parking in areas of recreational or tourist interest (e.g. discounted for use of electric vehicles).

## Degraded landscape

Landscape quality is an element of wider environmental quality[xxiv], which is under pressure from socio-economic changes, primary production, technological development, economic and demographic change, and public policy. The United Kingdom National Ecosystem Assessment[vii] identified the deterioration of some ecosystem services, including the 'loss of landscape diversity, an increase in soil erosion and reduced soil quality, and a reduction in farmland birds and pollinators.'

In Scotland, the Natural Capital Asset Index provides an integrated estimate of the state of ecosystems[xxv]. Scotland's natural capital is reported as being in a 'maintaining' state, after significant falls since at least 1950 (from an overall index value of approximately 118 to 102 in 2018). The element of the Index relating to 'aesthetic and entertainment interactions' indicates a downward trend between 2000 and 2013[xxvi]. Of 3,429 surface waters assessed in 2018 by SEPA, 63.5% were in a high or good state, but 16.6% were in a poor or bad state), with 318 currently affected by diffuse pollution and 91 by waste discharge.

In its Climate Change Risk Assessment for Scotland, the United Kingdom Climate Change Committee[xxvii] reported that although climate change is only one of the contributing factors to changes in Scotland's landscapes over recent decades, its effects on vegetation and land cover will have indirectly influenced land uses, and that 'the magnitude of climate change (and responses to it) will be a key factor in influencing' ongoing changes in land cover and land use. They recommend that climate and environmental change be 'more explicitly

incorporated into conservation planning at site level and at wider scales.' They assessed 'Risks and opportunities under changes in landscape character' to be under a 'watching brief'.

Other causes of degradation of landscapes are due to poorly specified designs of developments, a lack of control of the work on the ground, narrowly formulated public policies, or a lack of attention to the effects on people and the environment. The design of suitable nature-based solutions can deliver multiple co-benefits that include enhanced biodiversity, increased carbon sequestration, improved management of risks to the environment, offset adverse impacts, and the creation of resilient landscapes in rural and urban areas, human health and well-being[xxviii] (see Position Statement on Landscape and Health and Wellbeing). Their incorporation in landscape planning can be effective in tackling vacant or derelict land, urban regeneration and renewal (e.g. re-developments at Ravenscraig, Port Glasgow/Greenock waterfront, Clyde Gateway). Our cityscapes, and settings of urban places provide economic benefits, such as the tourism they offer, and our landscape can be enhanced by some of the infrastructure which forms key parts of our economy.

Tackling the degradation of landscapes requires an integrated, landscape level and ecosystem based approach to planning, management and governance. That approach must recognise the significance of all the components that contribute to the character and quality of landscapes, integrating those of the cultural and natural environment, tangible and intangible.

Such an ecosystem based approach would provide a "strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way"[xxix], as advocated by the IPBES in its report on land degradation and restoration[xxx], and consistent with the Land Use Strategy for Scotland[xxxi]. It would also be consistent with environmental principles adopted at international, EU, UK and Scottish levels. For discussion of environmental challenges see the Position Statement on Landscape and Resilience to Environmental Challenges.

Priorities for action are to define degraded landscapes through an interactive process involving communities of interests, local and otherwise, and identifying the types of actions needed. Degraded landscapes could be identified where they are in, or proximate to, the areas of highest multiple deprivation (as defined by the Scottish Index for Multiple Deprivation[xxxii]. These areas should be high priorities for action given the potential multiple benefits to the economy, quality of life, health and well-being for residents and visitors and addressing health inequalities (see Position Statement on Landscape and Health and Wellbeing).

A long term approach should be adopted to managing the environment in which landscape is recognised as an important contributor to, and outcome of land management for reversing biodiversity loss, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and ensuring equality and environmental justice. Landscape quality should be consciously linked with its stewardship, with aims of reversing biodiversity loss, the healthy functioning of nature more widely, and healthy places for people.

## Protected landscapes

Some of Scotland's land is of the greatest landscape quality nationally and internationally and should be properly cared for. Approximately 15% of Scotland is protected by international designations, and 22% by European Union designations[vii]. Thirteen percent of Scotland is designated by the 40 National Scenic Areas (NSAs).

The Scottish National Planning Framework 3, Scotland's two National Parks are "exemplars of a partnership approach to increasing sustainable economic growth and providing multiple benefits for residents, visitors and the wider Scottish economy"[xxxiii]. The challenges faced in these areas, of balancing economic, social and environmental considerations, have been used to provide opportunities to learn and focus research to understand issues such as visitor behaviour and the delivery of ecosystem services (e.g. for a review of these challenges and research being undertaken, see Hester, 2019[xxxiv]). We should be open and encouraging of discussion of extending the protection and promotion of Scotland's landscapes, our historic and natural environment, and gardens and designed landscapes through appropriate mechanisms.

A set of landscape principles should provide a basis for protection, recognising the co-benefits offered by landscapes towards other public goods (e.g. carbon management), whilst ensuring the identification and protection of those areas of highest scenic and landscape significance. A proposal for action is for a new, internationally valid and nationally enforceable statute implemented for protecting Scotland's finest landscapes, based on best international practice as, for example, developed by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas[xxxv]. Such a statute should also aim to ensure that landscape designations have a positive role, and be perceived as such. This requires a contemporary understanding of the current status of Scotland's landscapes, reviewing what constitutes the areas of highest landscape quality, and defining what actions are needed to safeguard their quality in the future. Such understanding should be in local, national and international contexts.

## Landscape for community

Landscape is a public good for the benefit of everyone, providing an important context for work, home life and recreation[xxxvi,xxxvii]. They are places for all its people and visitors, irrespective of race, gender, physical and mental abilities.

Scotland's landscapes are a highly significant part of the cultural heritage and identify of its people and its international reputation[xxxviii]. They are inspirations and contexts for creativity, with research suggesting "entertainment values are linked to accessible locations and areas of extraordinary scenic fulfilment or uniqueness and visually preferred natural landscapes"[xxxix]. This is reflected in the popularity of locations for film and TV with international audiences (e.g. Glen Coe for James Bond Skyfall; Fort William to Mallaig railway in Harry Potter films; locations for Outlander[xl]), and the promotion of such locations by Screen Scotland[xli,xlii].

In turn, it is reflected in entertainment tourism[xliii,xliii] and associated economic benefits of such uses, estimated for 2016 as £600m from inbound tourists to the UK linked to film-related screen tourism, and recognised in the Scottish Government Environment Strategy[xliv].

However, the publicity and subsequent popularity of such locations create challenges for Scotland's rural areas such as road congestion, visitor safety, footpath erosion and contested spaces[xlv], potentially denuding the quality of the landscapes that are the fundamental attraction. Blackstock *et al.* (2009)[xlvi] proposed the use of a 'responsible tourism lens' and 'collective and individual responsibility' of visitors as keys to sustainable tourism. The Cairngorms National Park Authority Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism (2011-2016) stress that "to be sustainable, tourism needs to be competitive and profitable as well as environmentally and socially responsible". Recent responses to COVID-19 appear to demonstrate that collective and individual responsibility can be effective. An equivalent attitude should be encouraged to help ensure shared benefits of the use of Scotland's landscapes.

The Scottish Government is committed to social and environmental justice, and co-deliberative processes of identifying visions and plans are in-line with the requirements of the European Landscape Convention[ii], Aarhus Convention for public engagement and participation in decision-making[xlvii], and the Scottish Land Use Strategy[xxxi].

However, there appears to be a lack of involvement in, and engagement by, communities of interest, and especially communities of place (i.e. local communities), in influencing future uses of land and landscape, and the process of decision-making. Amongst reasons identified by Dalglish (2018)[xlviii] are weak relations between communities and authorities', and a 'lack of recognition of the community voice'. The Regional Land Use Partnerships, foreseen in the Scottish Land Use Strategy[xxxi], provide a valuable opportunity to address this weakness with landscape scale and community led initiatives[xlix], community planning, and public involvement in visions for future land uses and landscapes. An aim could be to increase people's identification with Scotland's landscapes as part of increased engagement of society with landscape related issues. This would align with an aim of the Land Use Strategy for Scotland[xxxi] of reconnecting people and the land.

Creating stronger links between younger people and landscapes would be aided by the inclusion of landscape issues within the Curriculum for Excellence. This would provide an opportunity for linking education and landscape in the development of two of the fundamental capacities it aims to develop of 'responsible citizens' and 'effective contributors'. The focus of such collaboration should be on a change in the curriculum at primary and S1 to S3 levels, and for later years, to fully address the importance of place, place making and landscape quality in lives and livelihood. See, for example, *Into the Wildwoods*, which links archaeological discussion with ecological understanding of place and time (published by Forestry and Land Scotland), designed for 'Learning for Sustainability' in the Curriculum for Excellence.

Achieving this aim would benefit from collaboration and engagement with: i) key representative bodies, such as the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers, Archaeology Scotland, relevant public agencies (e.g. Nature.Scot, Forestry and Land Scotland, the National Park Authorities, Biosphere) and NGOs (e.g. National Trust for Scotland); ii) education providers (e.g. Ecoschools); iii) and operators of outdoor educational field centres in Scotland (e.g. Scottish Environmental & Outdoor Education Centres Association;). Kindrogen Field Centre; Ardentinny).

# What does the SLA recommend for safeguarding and promoting landscape in relation to land use and the economy?

## 1. Policies and measures

i) Landscape implications and objectives should be an explicit consideration in developing and implementing all relevant public policies. The design and implementation of future policies relating to agricultural and rural development provides an opportunity for increasing recognition of the close link between land management and landscapes. Such opportunities include the support of public goods through payment systems (e.g. landscape conservation and enhancement, care for the historic environment, managing soil carbon, enhancing biodiversity, protecting water quality).

ii) Incorporation of landscape outcomes as requirements of new agriculture and rural development support mechanisms to be designed for a Scottish approach post-Common Agricultural Policy.

iii) Encourage imaginative means of using offset payments as investments that return multiple benefits such as biodiversity net gain, contribution to net zero carbon emissions, caring for the historic environment, and bioeconomy focused activities.

iv) Establish a mechanism (such as a levy) through which visitors could contribute to the cost of maintaining and enhancing the landscapes that they come to enjoy.

## 2. Landscape protection

i) Update the existing legislation protecting Scotland's finest landscapes to ensure adequate geographical coverage and compliance with international standards of management.

ii) Enforcement of crimes relating to landscape and place, such as damage to public or private goods, such as the illegal removal of features (e.g. trees), damage to historic landscape features, or non-adherence to best practices in land management (e.g. muirburn).

iii) Require as a condition of public subsidy the retention and conservation of characteristic landscape features, whether natural or man-made, such as drystone dykes, hedges, rocky outcrops and semi-natural scrub.

iv) To recognise and protect the gardens, estates and designed landscapes of Scotland which are not represented on the 'Inventory of Designed Landscapes' and omitted from current forms of protection.

## 3. Engaging public and business in visions of future landscapes

i) Run a debate series for public audiences on how:
   a. Scotland can move to the net zero carbon economy, and contribute to the global effort to combat climate change, in a way that is at least cost to the quality and diversity of its outstanding landscape resource;
   b. landscape care and planning can best assist in the challenge of tackling the nature crisis, restoring ecosystem health and replenishing the country's depleted biodiversity.

ii) Run a programme for raising understanding of:
   a. Scottish businesses of the importance of multiple functions of green and open spaces in contributing to the attraction and habitability of Scotland's towns and cities as places to live and work;
   b. the public of the multiple functions of characteristics of green and open spaces (e.g. the roles of urban and street trees for mitigation of climate change, enhancing biodiversity, contributing to human well-being, see also see Position Statement on Landscape and Health and Wellbeing).

iii) Collaborate with relevant professional bodies and societies to create new initiatives or add value to existing ones (e.g. Edinburgh Science Festival; Scottish Science Centres; Royal Society of Arts Food, Farming and Countryside Commission).

iv) Design events to celebrate Scotland's landscape innovators such as Ian McHarg[l] and Patrick Geddes.

## 4. Landscapes and communities

i) Design community benefit mechanisms that include landscape outcomes.

ii) Fund community facilitators with a remit which includes landscapes and places, with training on landscapes as part of their professional development.

iii) Include funding mechanisms in a new Scottish Rural Development Programme (post 2020) that aim to increase partnership working and community-led innovation in relation to landscapes, and training of farm advisors of the importance of issues of landscape.

iv) Harness a sense of "pride of place" amongst local communities that can contribute to community-led stimulation of enterprise and economic success.

## 5. Training and education

i) Professions to include landscape issues as topics eligible for Continuing Professional Development.

ii) Increase investment in landscape planning and training in universities and colleges in Scotland.
iii) Address landscape issues explicitly in relevant subjects in primary and secondary education.
iv) Invest in open access courses to develop skills in landscape interpretation and awareness of the public.

## 6. Organisation and duties of government, at national and local levels, for landscapes

### a. Scottish Government

i) Design statements should declare contributions which link landscape quality and care to reversing biodiversity loss, net zero carbon emissions, and care for the historic environment.
ii) A statutory duty on local authorities for reporting on landscapes to further their care and maximise future benefits.
iii) Design funding mechanisms within the planning system which take account explicitly of landscape issues that include landscape rights.
iv) Develop a proposal for a future landscape forum to influence landscape led land use planning.
v) Appoint an independent national landscape advisor.

### b. Local Government

i) Clear identification of the office holders within local authorities with responsibility for landscape, and appropriate training.
ii) Ensure the representation of landscape interests, including data, in the vision and plans of Scottish Government's digital transformation of the planning system[li].

# Contact Us

For further information on the SLA or to discuss how you can work with the SLA to collaborate and delivering a robust economy through landscape and greenspace please contact:

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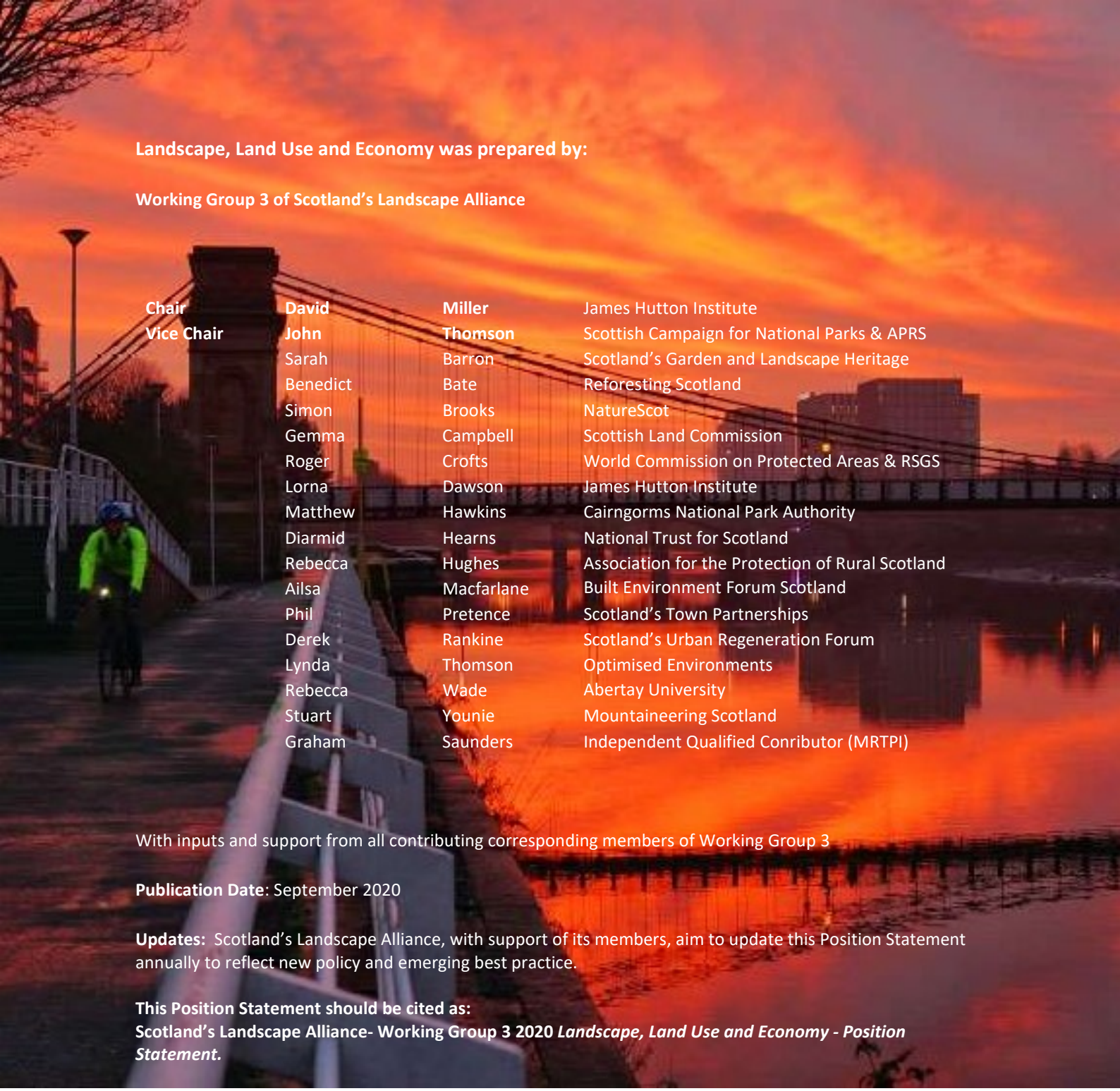

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